



# familymatters

a newsletter for foster and adoptive families

Published by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services

## Policy Power

*It's important for foster parents to stay familiar with DFCS policies that govern foster homes and foster parenting. Here is the latest information on some new or recently revised policy:*

### SAFE SUPERVISION

- *Occasional care* means care provided *once* a week or less, for a total of no more than three times;
- *routine care* means care provided more than once a week or more than a total of three times;
- *short-term care* means less than *four hours*.

Substitute caregivers who provide *occasional, short-term child-care* either in or outside the home are not required to undergo Child Protective Services (CPS) screenings. However, after the third time

that person has cared for a foster child (regardless of timeframe), the "occasional" provider becomes "routine" and is subject to the following requirements:

Substitute caregivers providing *routine* in-home or out-of-home childcare are required to complete Form 316 and submit to CPS screenings, Sexual Offender's Registry, Pardons and Parole and Department of Corrections screening prior to providing care for the child.

For a copy of Form 316, see [dfcs.dhr.state.ga.us](http://dfcs.dhr.state.ga.us), or your local case manager.

### INJURY PREVENTION

**CPR and First Aid certification** should be kept current.

**Motor Vehicles:** Foster parents are required to transport children under 6 years old in a federally approved child safety seat. Foster parents must never leave children unattended in motor vehicles if they are 12 years or younger, or if they are medically, emotionally, psychologically, or behaviorally challenged.

**Animals:** All dogs, cats and ferrets must be vaccinated for rabies. Re-immunizations are required either annually or every three years, depending on the vaccine. Homes with exotic animals or wildlife will require both a veterinarian's statement of their health and suitability for children and approval from the DFCS regional director. Any issues related to pets, such as size or quantity, will be thoroughly assessed and documented during the assessment and re-evaluation process.

**Fire Safety:** Homes with gas heaters can be approved for relative placements; however, in other foster homes no more than three unrelated children can be placed in a house with gas heaters.

### Per Diem Increases

The *per diem* reimbursement to foster parents – the amount the state of Georgia pays to help cover the cost of caring for foster children – will increase as of July 1, 2005.

The Georgia General Assembly included this increase in DHR's FY 2005 budget, with the support of Commissioner B. J. Walker and Governor Sonny Perdue.

CHILD'S AGE	CURRENT RATE	RATE AFTER 7/1/2005
0-5	\$ 12.75	\$ 13.68
6-12	\$ 13.50	\$ 15.50
13 and over	\$ 14.25	\$ 17.75

# Safety in Summer Fun

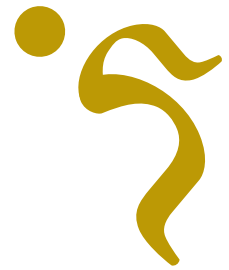


Now that the weather is getting hot, remember these simple ways to make sure your child can have fun in the sun this summer – safely:

- Before a child goes outside, put sunscreen on any bare skin (but avoid the eyes). The sunscreen should have a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Re-apply sunscreen periodically.
- Dress children and babies in lightweight, loose clothing. Hats with broad brims that shade the neck help prevent sunburn. Provide sunglasses that protect against ultraviolet rays.
- Plan indoor activities at midday when the sun's rays are strongest.
- Make sure that your child drinks lots of water, juices, or low-sugar, no-caffeine beverages.
- Never, ever leave a child alone in a car – especially during summer heat. Don't think "I'll just be gone a minute." The temperature inside a car can rise to dangerous heights in a very short time.

For more information for parents on skin cancer prevention:

[www.cdc.gov/ChooseYourCover/guide/htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ChooseYourCover/guide/htm) or call 1-800-4CANCER.



## Summer Enrichment for Foster Kids

The Summer Safety/Summer Enrichment program provides funding for summer activities for children in foster care. You can receive \$252 per foster child under age 14 to help pay for an approved camp or

other activity during June, July or August.

Activities could include a stimulating or culturally enriching program such as swimming or art classes or horseback riding. These could be offered by

the Red Cross, the YMCA or YWCA or a school. The children could attend day camp or an overnight camp (church-related or otherwise).

To discuss summer plans for your child and to find out

about how to apply for the funding, contact your child's case manager. If your foster child is 14 or over, contact the child's case manager for information about summer enrichment funds and activities.

### PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Family Matters reaches over 10,000 foster and adoptive parents. We are proud that we can provide you with this information. *However, printing and postage costs are high.*

**Please help us cut costs and send Family Matters to you faster.**

If you send your **name, zip code and email address** to **[familymatters@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:familymatters@dhr.state.ga.us)** we will email you future issues. Also, at any time, anyone can read the newsletter on the Web at [dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/familymatters](http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/familymatters).

# Foster Siblings: Five Keys to Success



*Foster families face many challenges. Children – both biological and adopted – need help to become successful foster brothers and sisters. Success is based on five keys:*

**Be prepared.** Parents need to sit down with their children before the Impact (foster parent training) process to help set the stage for the arrival of new children. Explain why you have chosen to become foster parents. Explain to your children that you will still be their Mom and Dad.

Let your children know that the children are coming to your house because they need someone to parent (keep them safe, feed them and so forth) but that the children usually have a daddy or mommy of their own. Give reasons why children come into foster care. Tailor your reasons to your child's age and ability to understand sensitive topics.

**Plan ahead.** When a foster child or children are assigned to your family, begin to talk about specific changes that will happen. Discuss sleeping arrangements. Consult with your children if the seating order at the dinner table will have to be rearranged to accommodate new children. Explain that you will continue to have special one-on-one time with each child. Ask your children if they want to help welcome the new child. Establish a welcoming ritual and include

your children. (For example, you might want your children to help give a tour of the house or bake cookies.)

Talk to each child individually. Ask for questions. Accept all feelings. Your children have the right to be angry, annoyed, worried and excited. Imagine how you would feel if your spouse or partner announced that another adult would be coming to share your home indefinitely.

**Be patient.** Set aside a playroom or play area with common toys and books. Permit your children to select items that will be off limits to foster children (unless they want to share). Encourage the children to play together but do not force them. Parents may want to join in play such as table games, walks in the park, or shooting hoops. Working on a project together is a great team and family building activity (for example, gardening, baking, painting).

**Be safe.** Foster children are children but they are also strangers. Sometimes they come from tough beginnings and they often bring their past into their new homes. The foster children should sleep

in separate beds and ideally in separate bedrooms. Supervised play should be the rule until you are sure that everyone is safe.

Teach your birth/adopted children about inappropriate touch *before* the foster children arrive. Explain about good touch, bad touch (hitting) and secret touch (sexual advances). State clearly that even if they are threatened not to tell it is *always* OK to tell you anytime anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them in their bathing suit area. This conversation should be focused on the world in general and not specifically about foster children. It is important to stress that children and teens can do bad and secret touches.

**Be joyful.** Stress the positive. Let children know that by taking in foster children you are putting your family's values into action. Children bring laughter into our homes in addition to work. Sharing the good things about your family is a gift. Learning about another person is a wonder. Becoming a foster family is a treasure, even though it may be challenging at first.

*Wendy Haus-Hanevold, PhD.*

Policy Power continued from front page

## DISCIPLINE AND OTHER SERIOUS FOSTER CARE POLICY VIOLATIONS

**Assessment:** Previously, assessment conclusions were either "substantiated" or "unsubstantiated." These terms are also used in CPS determinations. In order to provide a clear differentiation between policy violations and CPS investigations, assessment conclusions for policy violations are now called "supported" or "unsupported." A supported conclusion means that the concerns in the policy violation report have been validated through interviews, observations and other sources as warranted. An unsupported conclusion means that the concerns in the policy violation report cannot be validated.

## AGENCY ACTIONS:

Foster homes are placed on hold (no additional placements made) while being assessed for a disciplinary or other serious foster care policy violation.

*Permanent closure* of a foster home is required following any violation of foster care policy that has direct impact on the safety and well-being of the child or poses a serious risk for the child in the home; or following a second discipline or other serious foster care policy violation; or when the family is not amenable to change, correction or DFCS intervention.

A *Corrective Action Plan* can be used following an initial discipline or other serious foster care policy violation that does not have a direct impact on the safety and well-being of the child.

# Travel Plans?

## Contact DFCS First



*Are you a foster parent planning a vacation trip? Remember that you must first get approval from your county DFCS office. It's best to give at least two weeks' notice. Allow more time if you also need to get approval from the birth parent or the court.*

If you plan to take the child on a trip for *three days or less*, you can get oral approval from the child's case manager or supervisor before you leave. Be sure to provide a phone number where you can be reached in an emergency.

If your trip will last *more than three days*, get written authorization for the trip and written

authorization for emergency medical care for the child. Give the case manager or supervisor an emergency phone number.

If you are planning to travel with the child *outside of Georgia* and the child is in *temporary custody*, you must also get written permission from the child's birth parent and the court. If the child is in *permanent*

*custody*, the DFCS county director can give written permission.

If you want to travel with the child *outside the USA*, in addition to the above steps you must also get a waiver from a DFCS regional director. Be sure to get a passport and immunizations for the child, and remember that Georgia Medicaid will not cover the child outside of the USA.

*If DFCS doesn't approve* your plans to travel with the child, you and the agency will need to make arrangements for the care of the child during your absence.

Even if you are *not taking the child with you* on your travels, you need to contact DFCS at least two weeks in advance and let them know how the child will be cared for while you are away.

## TeenWork: Summer Job Program Launched

For six weeks this summer, 500 foster children ages 14-21 will have an opportunity to gain work experience and earn a paycheck. "TeenWork," sponsored by DHR and the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, is the first statewide summer jobs program for foster children in Georgia. Coca-Cola, Chick-Fil-A, Waffle House and 35 state agencies have pledged to employ the teenagers.

Studies have found that youth who have jobs while still in foster care are more successful at keeping jobs and leading productive lives after they leave care. TeenWork seeks to help teens in foster care have a positive work experience and gain marketable skills. Some teens will be mentored as they enter their first summer jobs.

Independent Living Program coordinators and other DFCS staff have been spreading the word to foster parents and children through local phone trees, fliers, mailings to residential facilities, and presentations at AFPAG meetings, plus a new Web site: <http://teenwork.dhr.georgia.gov>.

"Keep an eye on that Web site, because we plan to include a wide range of information to help foster children find jobs, in addition to the TeenWork program," says Millicent Houston, Independent Living Program manager. "This is an ongoing effort. We know that foster children have a lot to offer to the workforce, and these jobs will help them make a smoother transition to adult life."

# The Children's Attic



Brenda Morman, a LaGrange foster mother, knows what it means to take a baby into her home with nothing but a T-shirt, a blanket and one bottle. After this happened to her she organized The Children's Attic as a collection and distribution point for foster children's clothes and other supplies. Her employer, a private counseling service, donated space in the attic above their office.

When a foster child leaves, the foster parents usually send clothes, toys, extra diapers and bottles home with the child. Then they have to start over again with the next child.

"When people take a group of siblings who have nothing it's really a problem," says Morman. "Some people can't take a child because they don't have a spare bed."

Morman, who is also the secretary of her local chapter of the Adoptive and Foster Parents Association of Georgia, knows how to enlist community support for a good cause. She started by collecting surplus items donated by a consignment shop and giving other foster parents what she didn't need. Soon, she was filling her boss' attic with items for children from birth to age 18. In addition to clothes, she distributes school supplies, safety supplies, diapers,

bottles, and new and gently used furniture and toys. At Christmas she collects toys and funds for foster children's Christmas presents.

A group of church women who helped the Attic last Christmas asked what else was needed. At Morman's suggestion, they organized a "community baby shower" in March for foster parents of children newborn through two years old.

"People brought things for weeks," Morman says. "The gifts were new and nicely wrapped. It was really a huge blessing. One woman told me, 'We never thought about (foster children) not having anything.'"

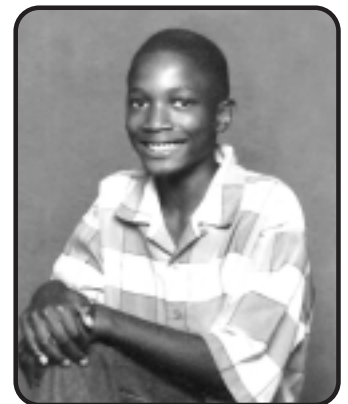
For more information about The Children's Attic or to make a donation, contact Brenda Morman at 706-884-0987 or [bmorman@charter.net](mailto:bmorman@charter.net).

## Help find Matthew a Home

*Mathew, born 02/92, is a friendly and outgoing child. He interacts very well with both peers and adults. Mathew loves sports. He enjoys playing and watching basketball, football and baseball. He also enjoys riding his bike, watching movies and playing video games.*

Matthew is a very helpful and well-mannered child. Without complaining, he sets the table for dinner every evening and takes out the trash. Enrolled in regular education classes, he says his favorite subject is reading. Mathew's teachers describe him as hard working and disciplined. He is an excellent student. Mathew received all A's on his last report card.

Matthew needs a patient and committed family, one that will provide him with unconditional love, individualized attention, stability and permanence. If you would like to know more about Matthew, please call My Turn Now at 800-603-1322 and speak with the regional adoption coordinator for their area.





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## Friends of Kids in Foster Care

If you know someone who would like to help children in foster care, suggest that they look into Friends of Kids in Foster Care (FKFC). This DFCS program seeks to involve local communities in providing the children with quality, ongoing support services.

Volunteers from churches, synagogues and senior citizen centers spend about two hours after school twice a month from September through May teaching elementary school children arts, crafts, games and other activities to bolster their self-esteem.

“Successful programs have been established in Fulton and DeKalb counties,” said Program Policy Specialist Michael Cohen, who coordinates FKFC. “I would like to expand the program to other areas

of the state. The program helps foster-care kids feel good about themselves, as well as offering the children a special time for fun. The volunteers serve as positive adult role models while building relationships with the children.”

Cohen is looking for volunteers 18 years and older who wish to work with children ages 8 to 11. After completing an application with two references, the volunteers must consent to a background check and attend a one-hour orientation meeting.

For more information about volunteering, starting a FKFC group for the upcoming school year, or referring children to the program, contact Cohen at 404-463-7285 or [mcohen@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:mcohen@dhr.state.ga.us).

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Michael Cohen,  
*FKFC Program  
Policy Specialist*

The purpose of *Family Matters* is to strengthen the relationship between resource parents and the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR); supplement foster and adoptive parents' training; and keep parents up to date about

new policies and services. It is published by the Division of Family and Children Services

Please send us your comments and ideas for articles you would like to see in *Family Matters* to Barbara Joye, DHR Office of Communications,

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